Church Attendance In Canada Drops To Record Low Point

Church attendance in Canada, on a typical May Sunday, has dropped to a 32% level—the lowest recorded in almost three decades of measurements, according to the Canadian Gallup Poll.

In 1957, when this question was first asked of Canadians, 60% reported attendance at church or synagogue in the past week. This proportion had dropped to 44% in 1970, and to 41% in 1975. But between 1980 and 1984, there was little or no change, with about 36% reporting attendance.

Most of the recent change has come from a decline in Roman Catholic attendance, with a 43% attendance level today, compared with 50% a year ago, and 87% in 1957.

Among Protestants 29% had attended church services, but this level is well below the 43% attendance found in 1957.

The following table shows results of this question:

Did you, yourself, happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?

CANADIAN CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE ATTENDANCE

	Nat. %	Roman Caths. %	Prots. %
1985	32	43	29
1984	36	50	29
1983	36	51	27
1982	35	48	27
1981	37	51	29
1980	35	50	26
1975	41	61	25
1970	44	65	28
1965	55	83	32
1957	60	87	43

The latest results are based on personal, in-home interviews with 1,047 adults, 18 years of age and over, conducted May 9–11. Samples of this size are accurate to within a 4% margin of error, 95 out of 100 times.

61% Give Pope John Paul II 'Highly Favorable' Vote

A majority of 61% give Pope John Paul II a "highly favorable" rating in a nationwide Gallup Poll completed in mid-July. This rating is based on the top two positions (plus 5 and plus 4) on a 10-point attitude scale, called the Stapel Scalometer, which measures intensity of feeling, both positive and negative.

Eight in 10 Catholics (79%) give the Pope a "highly favorable" rating, while 55% of Protestants do so.

The table shows the trends in the Pope's positive ratings since December, 1978. His tour of the U.S. in 1979 clearly boosted his ratings, which were sustained in subsequent measurements. The June 1981 figure may reflect, in part, sympathy for the Pope following the attempt on his life.

POPE JOHN PAUL II
(Plus 5, plus 4 ratings)

	Nat. %	Caths. %	Prots. %
July 1985	61	79	55
January 1984 ..	55	82	48
June 1982	54	80	46
June 1981	65	83	60
(assassination attempt)			
May 1980	59	85	51
October 1979 ...	56	80	47
(tour of U.S.)			
September 1979	48	73	38
June 1979	52	70	45
December 1978	47	67	41

By way of comparison, here are the highly favorable ratings given previous Popes:

	Nat. %	Caths. %	Prots. %
POPE PAUL VI (1963–1978)			
1977 (May) ...	37	66	26
1976 (May) ...	25	48	19
POPE JOHN XXII (1958–1963)			
1960 (Sept.) .	32	76	16
(Aug.) ..	32	75	17
(July) ...	34	77	19
(May) ...	34	77	20

7 in 10 Believe in Life After Death

Seven in 10 Americans (71%) say they believe in life after death, a proportion that closely parallels the findings of other surveys going back to 1944.

Here is the U.S. trend in belief in an afterlife, showing a high point of 77% recorded in 1952 and a low point of 67% in 1980:

Belief in Life After Death/Afterlife

1981	71%[1]
1980	67[2]
1978	71[3]
1975	69
1968	73
1965	75[4]
1961	74
1957	74
1952	77[5]
1948	68
1944	76

[1]Based on a survey conducted by Gallup International Research Institutes (GIRI) for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) and the European Value System Study Group.

[2]Based on a survey conducted for *Adventures in Immortality*, by George Gallup, Jr. and William Proctor, McGraw-Hill, 1982.

[3]Based on a survey, the *Unchurched American*, conducted for a consortium of 30 denominations, convened by the National Council of Churches in Christ.

[4]Based on a survey conducted for *The Catholic Digest* by The Gallup Organization, Inc.

[5]Based on a survey conducted for *The Catholic Digest* by Ben Gaffin Associates.

A higher proportion of believers is found in the U.S. than in 10 other nations in a 13-nation survey. The figure for the people of Northern Ireland (72%) is statistically the same, while the percentage for the Republic of Ireland (76%) is slightly higher.

The following question and results are based on the survey conducted by GIRI for CARA and the European Value System Study Group:

Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? . . . life after death?

	Yes, believe	No, don't believe	Don't know
Republic of Ireland	76%	14%	11%
Northern Ireland	72	14	14
UNITED STATES	71	17	13
Spain	55	26	18
Finland	49	32	20
Italy	47	33	19
Great Britain	45	35	19
Norway	44	40	16
Netherlands	42	40	18
West Germany	39	40	21
Belgium	37	39	24
France	35	50	19
Denmark	26	55	19

*Totals sometimes do not add to 100% due to rounding.

BELIEF IN HEAVEN AND HELL ALSO FIRM

Little change has also occurred in America's belief in heaven and hell over the last three decades. In the latest (1980) survey (conducted for the book *Adventures in Immortality*), 71% expressed a belief in heaven, while 53% said they believe in hell.

Here are the trends:

Belief in Heaven

1980	71%
1965	68
1952	72

Belief in Hell

1980	53%
1965	54
1952	58

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS REGISTERED BIGGEST GAINS BETWEEN 1970 AND 1983

Latest figures from the National Council of Churches, for 1983, show Southern Baptists increasing their lead as the largest non-Catholic denomination. The top 10—

	Total Members	Change Since '70
Southern Baptist	14,178,061	+ 22%
United Methodist	9,405,164*	− 11%
Mormon	2,930,000	+ 41%
Lutheran Church in America	2,925,008	− 6%
Episcopal	2,794,690	− 15%
Lutheran, Missouri Synod	2,630,947	− 6%
American Lutheran	2,343,412	− 8%
United Presbyterian	3,122,213	− 23%
United Church of Christ	1,701,513	− 13%
Assemblies of God	1,153,935	+ 85%

*Latest Methodist figure is for 1982.

'Religion In America, 1985' Report To Highlight 50 Years Of Trends

This year the Gallup Poll celebrates 50 years of measuring public opinion on key political, economic, social and religious trends in the United States. The new Gallup **RELIGION IN AMERICA**, 1985 report will highlight trends of the last half century in religious beliefs and practices, as well as long-term trends in views on the impact of religion on society.

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The report will also present a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups and by major faiths and denominations. Because no other organization regularly measures America's churchgoing habits, the Gallup Poll has lent its fact-finding service for this purpose.

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Here are four important reasons why these annual reports on religion in America have proved so popular:

1. They are an invaluable source of information on religious beliefs and practices in the U.S. and abroad, much of which is not available elsewhere.

2. They provide national and regional norms against which the clergy can match their own churches and synagogues in terms of religious belief, practice, knowledge and stewardship.

3. They provide new and exciting information that can be developed into sermons or articles on the state of religion.

4. They provide data indispensable for future planning: What are the new religious interests of church members and non-members? Where does the public think churches are falling short?

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RELIGION IN AMERICA, 1985 can be ordered from The Gallup Organization, Inc. P.O. Box 310, Princeton, New Jersey 08542. The cost of the 1985 report is $25.00.

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